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Idaho human rights director raises more militia concerns

BOISE (AP) — The Batt administration's top human rights official is reiterating the governor's objections to the extremist element of the militia movement, expressing concerns about the Idaho founder of the United States Militia Association.

Human Rights Commission Director Marilyn Shuler also questioned claims by Samuel Sherwood that he was misquoted by the media as saying people should be prepared to shoot legislators who decide to side with the federal government once a civil uprising against it breaks out.

"I've tried not to demonize the other side," Shuler said. "But to tell you the truth, I don't know what Mr. Sherwood is all about. I know some of the positions he's been quoted on I feel are very extreme and outside democracy."

Shuler, who spoke on Monday at a monthly public affairs forum in Boise, cited a series of statements Sherwood has made over the past two years that seem to contradict his current claims to a philosophy of nonviolence in the wake of the deadly bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City.

He now says the U.S. Militia Association would work with state and local officials — a change from his comments earlier when he called for the disbandment of the Idaho National Guard, which by state law is Idaho's only militia.

And while she welcomed any statements Sherwood might make to tone down what she fears is excessively inflammatory rhetoric, Shuler said, "Almost all of the militia people say the need for a militia is for an armed confrontation with the government."

A handful of Sherwood supporters were at the session, handing out flyers announcing one of their meetings next week and offering to set up a meeting between Shuler and Sherwood so she could better understand his positions.

"I think there has been too much evidence of people being used so I'd prefer not to do that," she replied.

Her statements echoed those of Gov. Phil Batt last week in northern Idaho where he said the private militias were unnecessary and in some cases unwelcome.

"I condemn any group which meets for the purpose of inciting violence against anybody or inciting racial hatred or bigotry," Batt said. "I am concerned that some of those groups may have a few members, at least, that focus on those items.

"I have no intention of ever calling a militia to operate in any state function at all," he said. "We have our National Guard, and I think they've served us well. I anticipate no circumstances in which I would call a militia into action."

SIP Idaho

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